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United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott
Eastern District of California

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CONTACT: Lauren Horwood
PHONE: 916-554-2706
edcapress@usdoj.gov

INTERNATIONAL FUGITIVE DUBBED “PONYTAIL BANDIT” SENTENCED TO 3 ½ YEARS FOR BANK ROBBERIES IN THREE STATES

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that United States District Judge Morrison C. England Jr. sentenced MORGAN MICHELLE HOKE, 21, of Austin, Texas to three and a half years in prison followed by three years of supervised release for bank robbery. She was also ordered to pay full restitution.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Sacramento Violent Crimes Task Force, which includes the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Roseville Police Department, and the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office. The Austin Police Department in Texas and the Lynnwood Police Department in Washington also participated in this investigation.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Michelle Rodriguez, who prosecuted the case, HOKE pleaded guilty on August 21, 2008 to three counts of bank robbery in three different states. She admitted that on May 7, 2007, she robbed the Wachovia Bank, 845 Mesa Drive, in Austin, Texas. HOKE used a note and made oral demands, including a threat to the life of the teller. Her sentence was enhanced because of this threat. Additionally, she admitted that on May 23, 2007, she robbed the Wells Fargo Bank, 2000 Douglas Blvd., in Roseville, Calif., and that on May 30, 2007, she robbed the First Heritage Bank, 19009 33rd Avenue West, in Lynnwood, Wash. After she committed the three robberies, she fled the United States and was later arrested in Thailand. Altogether, she obtained nearly \$15,000.

During the early stages of the investigation, the task force dubbed her the “ponytail bandit” because surveillance photos showed the robber to be a young woman wearing her hair in a ponytail that was pulled through the back of a baseball-type cap.

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